



**State
Representative
Eric
Pettigrew**

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Committees:

- Community & Economic Development & Trade *(Vice Chair)*
- Appropriations
- Early Learning & Children's Services

February

2007

A Report to the 37th District

Dear neighbors,

How can we make this a better place to live, work and raise a family?
How can we build a better Washington?

Today, our state stands at a crossroads. Some politicians say the only way to create jobs is to borrow and spend, as Congress did with record deficits. Others claim the answer to every problem is to wield the axe: cut the minimum wage, cut taxes, cut services.

I believe it's impossible to win a race to the bottom. Other countries will always have lower wages, lower taxes and fewer protections against pollution and toxic waste. Families in Washington have prospered when we've won the race to the top. Boeing, Microsoft, Costco, Starbucks, Amazon.com – those companies made it to the top by being the best.

To win that race to the top, we must give our citizens and children the best schools, the best jobs and the best health care.

This newsletter is my chance to tell you about issues important to our neighborhoods, and more importantly, to hear from you. What do you think? What reforms should the Legislature pass?

Thank you for taking the time to read this. It is an honor and a privilege to serve as your representative to the Legislature.

Sincerely,

Eric Pettigrew
State Representative

**37th
District**

State Representative **Eric Pettigrew**

Helping kids and families

Opportunity for all — Why are so many children of color in Washington's juvenile justice and welfare systems? I believe we have a duty to search for answers – and solutions – so we can break the cycle of poverty and crime. I'm proud to say this bill has a long list of Democratic and Republican co-sponsors. We owe it to our kids to fix this problem. (House Bill 1472, Pettigrew)

Preventing poverty from the start — Research shows that babies born with certain risk factors such as poverty or disabled parents have a greater chance of failure in school and life. We know the risks. But we also know that a simple thing – home visitations – can help those kids beat the odds. This reform would use home visits as a tool to help kids at risk right away. (House Bill 1365, Kagi)

Housing voucher for foster kids — It's our duty to take care of foster children. Right now, the state cuts off aid when a child reaches 18, and many foster children wind up in homeless shelters. I support a reform to provide a housing option for foster youth so these kids, rather than getting thrown on the streets, get a good start at an adult life.

Helping families with developmentally disabled kids — I've met a lot of families with developmentally disabled children, and they tell me how tough it is. This reform is one case where the right thing to do – helping DD kids live with their families – is also the cost-effective and smart thing to do. Kids do better at home. (House Bill 1548, Pettigrew)



Education

Our economy doesn't run on horsepower anymore – it runs on brainpower. A high-school degree isn't enough if Washington state is going to win the global race for the best jobs in the world.

Education is the key to breaking the cycle of poverty. Few people know that 50 percent of all college freshmen drop out, often because they can't afford the high price of college. That's a lot of wasted potential.

We can't continue to have so many kids dropping out of high school or college. A college degree is the surest ticket to the American Dream. Let's make that dream a reality for every student.

Here's what we're working on this session on education:

Early learning — On the first day of kindergarten, half of our kids are behind. Many never catch up. Investing in early learning gives every child – regardless of their parents' income or where they live – a chance to succeed.

Better math and science — Gov. Gregoire put money in her budget to standardize math education across the state and hire 750 new math and science teachers. I think that's a good start.

Stop handicapping school elections — Why is 59 percent of the vote a landslide for a politician, but a failure for a school district trying to pass a levy? I support a reform to fix this so schools are treated equally at the ballot box, not handicapped from the start.

First in your family to go to college — I'm the grandson of a sharecropper, but I had the opportunity to get a college education. It changed my life. So I strongly support the idea that if a student studies hard and wants to be the first in the family to earn a college degree, we shouldn't let financial barriers stand in the way of that dream.

Passport to college for foster kids — I've heard foster kids testify that they've gone to 11 schools. Imagine how hard that is on your studies. And until we pass a reform, every foster child gets completely cut off from support when they turn 18. They're on their own. It's no shock that foster kids have one of the lowest college graduation rates. This new law would help fix that. It's the state's duty to take care of foster kids, so this bill keeps that promise by paying for college. (House Bill 1131, Dunshee)

A Report to the 37th District

Jobs

Washington state isn't just home to Microsoft, Starbucks and Amazon.com – we also have thousands of small businesses who are creating new jobs and new products every day.

We're considering a number of reforms to help create more jobs.

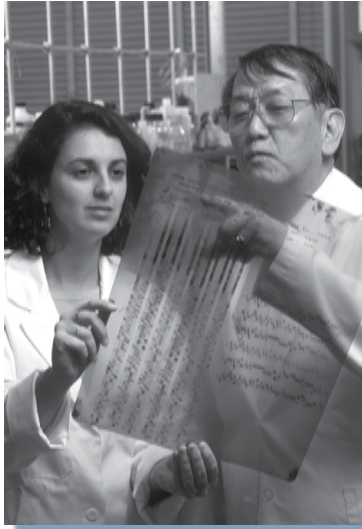


Photo from USDA-ARS

Improve research and development — We're going to give funding to world-class research being done at our flagship research universities, the University of Washington and Washington State Universities.

I also support the Innovation Zone Act to build innovation zones where industries can grow around research institutions. (House Bill 1091)

Clean energy — I believe we must continue to push hard for clean, local energy because we can't remain addicted to expensive foreign oil. The prices for oil from the Middle East are too unstable, and I don't want our economy held hostage by international politics.

Tax breaks for new businesses — Small businesses actually create the most jobs. But small businesses don't make money right away. It takes time. To create jobs, I support exempting new small businesses from paying state B & O taxes for the first six months.

I also support boosting funding for Small Business Development Centers, which give critical technical services such as business planning and payroll training to new and existing small businesses.

Reviving struggling neighborhoods — I support a number of reforms to help neighborhoods, including:

- New Market Tax Credits, a new tool that would support economic development and jobs in low-income neighborhoods like Rainier Valley.
- Grants for micro-lending to organizations that focus on helping individuals climb out of poverty, permanently, through entrepreneurship.

Health care

The problems we face —

- Health care costs are rising at an unsustainable rate 72,500 children and 520,000 adults lack health coverage.
- People without health insurance rely on emergency rooms, the most expensive possible option, driving up costs for everyone.
- Workers with health insurance often lose coverage when they change jobs.

What we're doing to help kids

I support a new law (House Bill 1071) that would (1) make it easier for kids to get health coverage, (2) promote better health for kids, (3) partner with parents on nutrition and exercise, (4) make sure our kids have good food and PE at school and (5) track the quality of health care for our kids, with the goal of improving their health every year.

Health care reforms to help local workers and small businesses —

The highest number of uninsured people are 19 to 35-year-olds who work for small businesses, because it's expensive to get coverage right now. And if you already have cancer or a chronic illness like diabetes, it could cost incredible amounts of money to get health coverage.

It's our duty to fix this so people without health coverage – or those unlucky enough to get cancer – don't have to hold fundraisers to pay their medical bills.



I was happy to have my daughter, Linda, share in the celebrations at the House of Representatives on Martin Luther King Day – which also fell on Children's Day, when lawmakers bring their kids, grandkids or young relatives to the House chamber. Please contact my office if you know a high school student who wants to serve as a legislative page or a college student who's interested in doing an internship at the House.

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